

HISTORIC COMMISSION REPORT

by Ted Park

Preliminary report of the Duxbury Historic Commission on enlarging the Historic District created in March 1966 by the action of the Town Meeting (Article 58).

FOREWORD

In 1966 Duxbury voted to create a historic district surrounding the John Alden House which was built in 1653 by John Alden's son Jonathan. In this house, John Alden, the last survivor of the signers of the Mayflower Compact, lived with his wife Priscilla Mullins Alden in their later years. John died in this house in 1697 at the age of 89. The property is now owned by the Alden Kindred of America and is open to the public.

The town was first settled around 1632 by people of Plymouth. Previously the settlers had returned to Plymouth in the winter, but more settlers arriving from England and a need for more land for farming and keeping their cattle inspired the crossing of the Jones River to permanently settle in Duxbury. Duxbury was incorporated in 1637, according to the records of the General Court.

In 1973, the townspeople realize a duty to retain what remains of an excellent collection of 16th, 17th and 18th century houses. This collection is unsurpassed by any other town in the U.S. By a combination of fortune and dedication over 200 buildings in these areas remain mostly unchanged over the years. The Historic District Commission proposes to safeguard this priceless heritage by creating in 2 stages an historic district to encompass our remaining original buildings of the 16th, 17th, and early 18th centuries. The first stage will include about 150 houses and sites as laid out on the historic district map included with this report.

The historic district has been researched and laid out by town historian Dorothy Wentworth, assisted by other members of the commission. The buildings and sites have been classified by centuries. Many of the buildings have been researched through registry records as to original owners and the Duxbury Rural & Historic Society founded in 1883 has attached dateboards to many of the buildings. Other sources include Winsor's History of Duxbury and town records. Records of the Historic District Commis-

Duxbury Clipper, Thursday, March 1, 1973

sion are kept in its office at 15 Chestnut St. The Rural & Historic Society maintains an extensive library in its headquarters in the King Caesar House on Powder Point.

The historic district encompasses properties in all sections of the town, although most of the properties in Stage I are along Duxbury Bay. Splendid examples of the architecture of the 16th, 17th and early 18th centuries are to be found in all sections. Fortunately along with saving its architectural heritage, Duxbury has retained its rural atmosphere and open spaces with the aid of a hard working Conservation Commission. Zoning measures to be presented at Town Meeting will further enhance the town. There

are no real intrusions within the Historic District although the Route 3 highway divides the town. It is hoped that enlarging the historic district to all sections of town will promote a spirit of togetherness in preserving the past.

The boundaries are laid out on the map on record with the town clerk and part of this report. Natural boundaries include Duxbury Bay and the Duxbury marshes between Duxbury and Marshfield. Many properties are protected by conservation agreements.

Descriptions of all properties will be included in the files of the Historic District Commission. They include at least a short history, 2 color photographs and a color slide. If desired duplicates of this material will be dispatched to the Massachusetts Historic Commission.

The proposed Duxbury by law contains in Section 203 the minimum controls as provided for under the General Laws of Massachusetts. This proposed by law will be voted upon at the 1973 Town Meeting.

The membership of the commission is:

Mrs. Dorothy Wentworth, town historian; Gordon Cushing, Michael Schofield, resident of the District; Donald Walker, resident of the District and member of the Plymouth County Board of Realtors; Harold Bush Brown, member of the American Institute of Architects, Sally Wilson, Francis Park III, of the Duxbury Planning Board and acting chairman of the commission.